

Office of Advocacy and Outreach

Advisory Committee on Beginning Farmers and Ranchers

CHARTER

1. Committee's Official Designation

The Advisory Committee on Beginning Farmers and Ranchers (hereinafter referred to as the "Committee").

2. Authority

The Committee was originally authorized pursuant to Section 5(b) of the Agricultural Credit Improvement Act of 1992, U.S.C. 1929; and reauthorized under the Food, Conservation, and Energy Act of 2008, and is established and managed in accordance with the provisions of the Federal Advisory Committee Act (FACA), as amended, 5 U.S.C. App. 2.

3. Objectives and Scope of Activities

The purpose of this Committee is to advise the Secretary on strategies, policies, and programs that enhance opportunities for new farmers and ranchers.

4. Description of Duties

The Committee is to meet and review comments on beginning farmer and rancher policy and program issues and collaborate to make recommendations to the Secretary. The Committee shall advise the Secretary on matters broadly affecting new farmers and ranchers. The Committee shall consider Department goals and objectives necessary to implement prior recommendations and develop and recommend a framework and overall strategy that will encompass the following:

- Principles to leverage and maximize existing programs to assist beginning farmers and ranchers;
- Methods and strategies to amplify and improve State collaboration and participation in programs;
- Opportunity creation strategies and pilot programs (e.g. farm apprenticeships, farm incubators) to develop new farming and ranching operations;
- Ideas to provide relief from labor and taxation challenges.

5. Agency or Official to Whom the Committee Reports

The Committee reports to the Secretary of Agriculture.

6. **Support**

The Office of Advocacy and Outreach is responsible for working across all relevant agencies to support the Committee. The Designated Federal Officer (DFO) will provide administrative support to the Committee.

7. **Estimated Annual Operating Costs and Staff Years**

The Committee's operating and staffing budget will be up to \$112,000 and 1.0 full time equivalent (FTE).

8. **Designated Federal Officer**

A permanent Federal employee is to be appointed in accordance with agency procedures and will serve as the Designated Federal Official (DFO). The DFO will approve all committee and subcommittee meetings; prepare and approve all meeting agendas, attend all committee and subcommittee meetings, adjourn any meeting when the DFO determines adjournment to be in the public interest, and chair meetings when directed to do so by the official to whom the advisory committee reports.

9. **Estimated Number and Frequency of Meetings**

The Committee will meet every year or every other year depending on the need and at the discretion of the Secretary.

10. **Duration**

Continuing.

11. **Termination**

Unless renewed by appropriate action prior to expiration, the Committee will become administratively inactive two years from the charter filing date.

12. **Membership and Designation**

The Committee shall consist of up to 20 members. The Secretary appoints membership based on self-nominations or nominations submitted by others. All members will have the requisite experience in agriculture that enables them to participate fully in the work of the Committee. Among the membership of the Committee, there shall be representatives from the following:

- a) The Farm Service Agency;
- b) State beginning farming programs;

- c) Commercial lenders;
- d) Private non-profit organizations with active beginning farmer or rancher programs;
- e) The National Institute of Food and Agriculture;
- f) Community Colleges or other educational institutions with demonstrated experience in training beginning farmers and ranchers, and;
- g) Other entities or persons providing lending or technical assistance for qualified beginning farmers and ranchers.

All members of the Committee may be designated as Representatives or Special Government Employees under FACA rules. Regular Government Employees may also be appointed pursuant to the statute that outlines this Committee's composition. All members shall serve on a voluntary basis without compensation. Members shall be entitled to receive reimbursement for travel expenses and per diem related to attending Committee meetings in accordance with Standard Government Travel Regulations. Other aspects of the Committee memberships and designations are as follows:

- a. The Committee will be fairly balanced in its membership in terms of the points of view represented and the functions to be performed. Steps will be taken to encourage new viewpoints, including establishing staggered membership terms and limiting the number of renewed memberships. The Committee shall consist of no more than 20 people appointed by the Secretary.
- b. The Secretary or federal designee shall appoint a Chairperson and Vice Chair. The Chairperson will be an individual recognized for their ability to lead a group in a fair and focused manner and who has been briefed on the mission of this Committee.
- c. Equal Employment Opportunity practices in accordance with USDA policies will be followed in all appointments to the Committee. To ensure that the recommendations of the Committee have taken into account the needs of the diverse groups served by the Department, membership shall include, to the extent practicable individuals with demonstrated ability to represent minorities, women, and persons with disabilities.
- d. The USDA prohibits discrimination in all of its programs and activities on the basis of race, color, national origin, age, disability, and where applicable, sex, marital status, familial status, parental status, religion, sexual orientation, political beliefs, genetic information, reprisal, or because all or part of an individual's income is derived from any public assistance program.
- e. To maintain the highest levels of honesty, integrity, and ethical conduct, no Committee member shall participate in any "specific party matters" (i.e., matters that are narrowly focused and typically involve specific transactions between identified parties) such as a lease, license, permit, contract, claim, grant, agreement, or related litigation with the Department in which the member has a direct or indirect financial interest. This includes the requirement for members to immediately disclose to the

DFO (for discussion with USDA's Office of Ethics) any specific party matter in which the member's immediate family, relatives, business partners.

All members will receive ethics training annually to identify and avoid any actions that would cause the public to question the integrity of the Committee's advice and recommendations. Members who are appointed as "Representatives" are not subject to Federal ethics laws because such appointment allows them to represent the point(s) of view of a particular group, business sector or segment of the public.

Members appointed as "Special Government Employees" (SGEs), SGE's are considered intermittent Federal employees and are subject to Federal ethics laws. SGE's are appointed due to their personal knowledge, academic scholarship, background or expertise. No SGE may participate in any activity in which the member has a prohibited financial interest. Appointees who are SGEs are required to complete and submit a Confidential Financial Disclosure Report (OGE-450 form) and, upon request, USDA will assist SGEs in preparing these financial reports. To ensure the highest level of compliance with applicable ethical standards, USDA will provide ethics training to SGEs on an annual basis. The provisions of these paragraphs are not meant to exhaustively cover all Federal ethics laws and do not affect any other statutory or regulatory obligations to which advisory committee members are subject.

13. Subcommittees

The Office of Advocacy and Outreach has the authority to create subcommittees provided; however, that the Secretary may approve, reject or discontinue these subcommittees at any time. Subcommittees must report back to the parent Committee, and must not provide advice or work products directly to the Secretary.

14. Recordkeeping

The records of this Committee, formally and informally established subcommittees, or other subgroups of the committee, shall be handled in accordance with General Records Schedule 26, Item 2 or other approved agency records disposition schedule. These records shall be available for public inspection and copying, subject to the Freedom of Information Act, 5 U.S.C. 552. Information about this Committee is available online at: <http://www.outreach.usda.gov/committees/ACBFR.htm>

15. Filing Date

February 6, 2015